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ABSTRACT

The new Federal Youth Center in Pleasanton, California is attempting to pioneer in successful ways of correcting offenders. Constructed at a cost of five and one half million dollars, the correctional institution offers many innovative programs. As part of the Federal Bureau of Prisons building program, three objectives are to be kept in mind: (1) to reduce critical overcrowding resulting from the substantial increase in commitments from Federal courts, (2) to provide smaller institutions with environments designed to facilitate correctional programs and meet the human need for privacy and dignity, and (3) to eventually replace our large antiquated penitentiaries. Past changes with positive effects will be retained. These programs include vocational and academic training, industrial training, work and study release, college-level courses, and a wide range of intensive counseling. One innovative program at Pleasanton will be its cocorrections program, an opportunity for male and female offenders to work together--a major step toward normalization. The Functional Unit Concept will utilize small housing areas handling 600 or fewer inmates. Each of these functional units has its own resident staff. These programs attempt to resolve the problems inherent in larger facilities and more successfully deal with rehabilitative needs of the young offender. (MW)

Department of Justice

REMARKS

BY

NORMAN A. CARLSON

DIRECTOR OF THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS

DEDICATION

FEDERAL YOUTH CENTER

July 19, 1974

Pleasanton, California

I am very pleased to be with you today as we join together to dedicate this new Federal Youth Center.

It is significant that we have located in California the first new facility for young offenders to be constructed since the Robert F. Kennedy Center was opened in West Virginia in 1969.

The new center is important for several reasons.

It supports the basic contention of the Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Prisons that correction of the youthful offender is one major key to reduction of crime.

The center also demonstrates our belief that institutions should be located where they will best serve the needs of society.

Since California now has the largest population of any state, it makes a great deal of sense to have this new facility built here.

And there is another very important though, less tangible, reason. The Federal Bureau of Prisons is attempting to pioneer in new and we think successful ways of correcting offenders. We hope to show in the Youth Center here some of the same spirit of the "Forty-Niners" that led to the creation of your state and which guides it still.

As Attorney General Saxbe said recently, all of us in government must find new and better ways of carrying out the public's business.

In the Federal Bureau of Prisions, we have embarked on a number of ambitious efforts to help reduce crime while salvaging human lives.

We need successful innovations in the entire criminal justice system today more than at any time in history.

Law enforcement agencies, the courts, and correctional agencies have now begun to realize that we are closely bound together by common goals and common problems. If we work together well enough, then we can fashion uncommon achievements.

The problems and shortcomings of any one component of the criminal justice system soon come back to haunt the entire system.

By working closely together, we can develop a much higher level of public safety for all.

As law enforcement agencies become more efficient, the number of offenders who appear before the bar of justice increases.

As the courts develop new and better methods of processing the increased caseloads, the demands made on corrections become much more intense.

At the same time, the level of public expectations rises--and rightly so. The public has a perfect right to demand top-notch performance from all in corrections, whether at the Federal, state, or local level.

I am convinced that the public today supports efforts to improve our nation's jails and correctional institutions.

They want to be protected against crime. But they know that all too often in the past offenders were unchanged by the treatment, or the lack of it, received in institutions.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons has worked diligently for a long time to make its operations more effecitve and to develop a series of responsible alternatives to incarceration. These alternatives include such things as expanded community treatment programs.

But within the context of those improvements, there is a paradox. While more men and women are diverted to community programs, those going into institutions increasingly tend to be in the category of the hard-core offender. They are much more difficult to reach, to change, with conventional corrections programs.

And while all of this work goes on, we are looking over our shoulders at the subtle tyranny of statistics telling us that the crime rate is on the increase.

Institutions such as Pleasanton are a significant, positive contribution to the entire criminal justice system. And I believe they will help provide the basis for lasting crime reductions.

The objective of corrections is to equip offenders to achieve all that their individual potential will allow and to turn them from a life of crime. With so much at stake, we cannot afford innovations that are merely gimmicks or window dressing for the same old, tired, marginally successful programs of the past.

Effective innovations must actively involve the people we serve--both the residents of our institutions and society as a whole.

In addition, innovations must be both relevant and realistic. We also need to be certain that, as we search for better methods, we do not automatically reject those approaches which have worked in the past.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons is proud of its traditions. Under its three prior directors--Sanford Bates, James V. Bennett and Myrl Alexander--the Bureau has long been in the forefront of responsible correctional change.

They did not believe, as some do, that the business of corrections should be the concern of only the correctional professional. In the past, too many corrections officials felt that while community support would be appreciated, community involvement in an institution would have to be curteously but firmly discouraged.

Thankfully, that has not been our experience at Pleasanton nor is it the way we do business generally.

We seek another path.

This institution had its beginning when the House and Senate Appropriations Committees continued their long standing history of support for correctional progress by allocating funds for its construction.

And we then found that we had the support and cooperation of the local community.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly recognize and genuinely thank some specific groups and individuals for their invaluable assistance.

First, the city officials of Pleasanton and the Chambers of Commerce of both Pleasanton and Dublin earned our appreciation through their warm acceptance of our local staff, programs and mission.

Nevin Cavero, the project foreman, and his crew members, have worked diligently to insure that construction deadlines were met.

Neil Sweeney, Superintendent of the Amador Valley School District, has proven a very valuable resource in developing local vocational training and other educational resources.

Sheriff Frank Madigan of Alameda County has been a most positive and encouraging force throughout our initial planning and construction phases.

Finally, all of the representatives of the local news media deserve our thanks for their responsible approach to telling the story of this new center.

We have enjoyed our professional and personal contacts with all of you. And we look forward to a long and mutually beneficial relationship in the future.

This institution--its people and its programs--will be a tangible asset to this community. It was constructed at a cost of some five and one half million dollars. Although this is a large amount, I can assure you that the traditional

walled penitentiary with its mass of steel and concrete would have cost far more and not allowed us to do as much in terms of beneficial, realistic programs. Much of that 5-1/2 million dollars was spent in the local community.

There will be other, long range financial benefits for this area. With a staff of 137 personnel and an institution population of 250, there will be an average annual institution budget of approximately $2,250,000. Again, much of this money will find its way back into the local community.

I would also like to recognize the staff--and the residents--of this institution since their contributions will ultimately determine the success of our programs. As Director of the Bureau, one of my greatest satisfactions has been the high degree of professionalism and skill demonstrated by the employees of the organization. From my conversations with Warden Lumpkin, I am confident that the Pleasanton staff will meet the high standards established by their colleagues at other institutions.

Perhaps the most important force for change at any institution is the offender population.

It is significant that the residents of Pleasanton are participating in this dedication ceremony. It is the first time this has happened in the Federal system. And I feel it indicates again our commitment to create institutions where residents and staff work together as a team.

Even more important is our desire to create an environment in which individuals are respected for their individuality, allowed to build upon their strengths, and given meaningful opportunities to demonstrate their acceptance of responsibility.

I can assure you that participation in this dedication ceremony is only the beginning of many significant 'firsts' for Pleasanton.

In order to be successful, our efforts must be thoroughly realistic.

Reality tells us that the Federal prison population is increasing rapidly. It also tells us that persons being committed by the courts are more sophisticated offenders than those of 10 or 15 years ago.

To give you one example, interstate transportation of stolen motor vehicles was a very common offense for those committed to our institutions 10 years ago. While it is still common, the far more serious offense of armed bank robbery has increased to the point where it constitutes more than 20 percent of our total inmate population.

Faced with an increased population--and with longer sentences--the Federal Bureau of Prisons has embarked on a major building program with three primary objectives in mind.

One is to reduce critical overcrowding resulting from the substantial increase in commitments from Federal courts.

Another is to provide smaller institutions with environments designed to facilitate correctional programs and meet the human need for privacy and dignity.

Finally, we plan to eventually replace our large, antiquated penitentiaries--three of which were built prior to 1900.

I would be less than candid if I did not tell you that our building program has met with opposition from several organizations and individuals who feel that all correctional institutions are inherently evil and do not protect society.

In response, I would say that it often is far too easy to arrive at simple answers to complex human problems. I wish that the answers were as simple as our critics suggest. Unfortunately, they are not.

Every day dedicated correctional professionals confront knotty problems which cannot be solved merely by unlocking the door, letting everyone out, and closing the institution down.

The problems involve individual human beings. As such, they are as complex as the human mind itself. There are no textbooks which provide easy, step-by-step solutions.

Instead, there has to be close, individualized attention, experienced analysis, and dedicated team effort on the part of a great many people.

We do not shrink from criticism. Nor do we contend that we have all the answers.

But we do refuse to be stampeded by instant experts into hasty and unrealistic decisions which could have serious consequences for both offenders and society.

In their attacks on all institutions, some critics perceive only one kind--perhaps similar to that described by a warden in the early 19th century who described his philosophy this way:

"They (prisons) should be terrifying, dark and comfortless abodes of guilt and wretchedness. No mode of punishment is so well adapted to prevent crime and reforming a criminal as close confinement in a solitary cell, cut off from all hope of relief, furnished with a hammock on which to sleep and a block of wood on which to sit. There his vices and crimes will be personified and appear to his frightened imagination as convenants to overwhelm him with horrow and remorse."

I know of no responsible correctional administrator who would today subscribe to such a concept. To do so would not only be cruel and inhumane. It would also be as unrealistic as saying that we can immediately shut down all our institutions.

As you look about, I am sure you will find nothing in this institution which matches the description given by that 19th century warden.

This is an institution built on the premise that individuals can change, that they can learn and mature, that their individuality and human dignity can be kept intact and actually enhanced.

Correctional innovations must be relevant. They must have some importance to the individuals involved and some bearing on the skills required to succeed in our society.

We have a considerable body of evidence which suggests that past innovations have had a positive effect on the lives of those released from Federal institutions. These programs include vocational and academic training, industrial training, work and study release, college-level courses, and a wide range of intensive counselling.

One of the yardsticks we now use to measure the effectiveness of the Federal Bureau of Prisons is a comprehensive research program, and we announced the first results not long ago.

The findings showed that two out of every three offenders released in 1970 were not subsequently convicted of serious crimes. The success rate obviously falls short of the ideal. But it is far better than many estimates which contend that up to 80 percent of all inmates released from all institutions soon become recidivists.

One of the innovative programs at Pleasanton will be the opportunity for male and female offenders to work together. We refer to this program as co-corrections and it is already in operation at three other Federal institutions. We offer it not as a frivolous gesture, but as just one more realistic alternative to traditional correctional practice.

Again, reality tells us that more than 98 percent of all inmates will return to society some day, and they have to be prepared for it in measured, realistic ways.

Social skills--or the lack of them--are an extremely relevant factor in whether an individual makes satisfactory adjustment in the outside world. It thus appears only logical that we should attempt to normalize our institutions whenever possible--consistent with our over-all goals and sensible security measures. Co-corrections is one step toward normalization. It is another tool in our attempt to build a sense of responsibility in offenders by giving them actual opportunities to face and handle real responsibilities.

Our experience with co-corrections to this point indicates that the great majority of offenders adequately handle the responsibilities of living in a mixed, correctional community. We also have learned that they welcome and appreciate this tangible indication of trust and confidence.

Approximately 55 to 60 female residents, one fourth of the total institution population, will reside in separate quarters but will be actively involved in vocational and academic training, counseling, and all other aspects of institutional living and programs. We offer this program not as a panacea since we recognize some very real problems that could develop without close supervision.

There is, however, a positive trade off for these potential problems--we have never had a homosexual rape in our co-correctional

institutions; indeed, the whole atmosphere of such a institution mitigates against homosexual activity. What we hope to do with such a program is to further normalize the instituion environment so that an individual will not lose touch with the "real" world, its obligations and his responsibilities.

There are a great many innovative and successful programs being carried out by the Bureau--covering every important aspect of our basic effort to basic effort to rehabilitate.

Again, we have tried to let relevance and realism be our guide in implementing such programs. Not just academic programs so that an inmate can say he has earned a diploma, but programs that actually equip him with necessary, measurable skills; not vocational training that merely occupies time but vocational training programs that give him a real chance with a prospective employer; not counseling just for the sake of having a counseling program but to build strengths and life skills in areas necessary for successful reintegration into society.

One of our newest, and potentially most successful, programs is the Functional Unit Concept upon which this institution is founded. We hear a great deal about the institutionalized offender; the inmate who comes into a large facility and immediately gets lost in the shuffle. His needs are not met, his problems are not resolved, and-unless he creates problems--he often goes totally unnoticed. This institution, and others in the federal system, has attempted to resolve the

problem of the "host" inmate with small housing areas handling 600 or fewer inmates. Each of these functional units has a staff, physically located within the unit, equipped to handle and resolve the great majority of inmate needs. With such a centrally located, well trained staff in close contact with all the residents of the unit, we firmly believe that we can better gear our efforts to the individual's own unique potential and problems. In short, we are not going to lose any more inmates in the great gray mass of "institutionalization."

I am certain we all know that regardless of what success may be achieved, there are still those who will attack the very existence of institutions--or at least some of our programs.

And we know, too, that there will always be those who attack any new program--no matter how well tested and thought out, by accusing us of coddling inmates or running country clubs.

I can offer no better response to that argument than a comment made by George Bernard Shaw:

"You could at any moment find dozens of people who have never been imprisoned and never will be, and are yet worse citizens than any but the very worst of our convicts. Much of the difference between the bond and the free is a difference in circumstances only: If a man is not hungry, and his children are ailing only because they are too well fed, nobody can tell if he would steal a loaf if his children were crying for

bread and he himself had not tasted a mouthful for twenty-four hours. Therefore, if you are in an attitude of moral superiority to our convicts: if you are one of the Serve them Right and Give Them Hell Brigade, you may justly be invited, in your own vernacular, either to Come Off it, or else Go Inside and Take the measure you are meting out to others no worse than yourself."

The Federal Bureau of Prisons, as it has in the past, will continue to test, to innovate, and to draw upon the best that our staff members, offenders, and society can offer to us.

We will continue to welcome constructive criticism and to remain open to questions, suggestion, and ideas. To do any less would be to fail both our mission and our public trust.

By working together, I believe that corrections can become a powerful instrument for the reduction of crime. And that is what we intend to do at this new institution.

Thank you.